

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please revise the specification as follows:

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 3, line 21 as follows:

In yet another embodiment, the blades of the distractor are configured to permit insertion of any type of implant. In particular, although certain implants may be provided with slots for engagement with a surface of the distractor blades during insertion, other implants do not have such slots. The blades of the third embodiment of the present invention are configured and sufficiently spaced apart to permit insertion of either type of implant, regardless of whether slots are provided for engaging distractor blades. ~~The spaced apart blades may be fixed with respect to the distractor jaws, or alternatively may be removably coupled to the distractor jaws.~~

Please amend the paragraphs starting on page 4, line 21 as follows:

Fig. 8 is a side elevational view of the blade of the distractor of Fig. 1;

~~Fig. 8a is an isolated top elevation view of spaced apart blades of an alternate distractor in accordance with the present invention;~~

Fig. 9 is a side elevational view partially in cross-section of the distractor of Fig. 1 with the blade removed;

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 7, line 22 as follows:

In the embodiment of Figs. 1-3, blades 44a, 44b are provided on jaws 14a, 14b, respectively, to engage the vertebrae to be distracted. ~~Blades 44a, 44b are shown in Fig. 8 and described in detail below. Alternatively, the spaced apart blades 440 of Fig. 8a may be provided on jaws 14a, 14b as described in more detail below.~~ In a preferred embodiment, blades 44a, 44b are configured and shaped to correspond to a slot 45 in an implant such as cage 46 of Fig. 4 or femoral ring 48 of Fig. 5. Thus, as the selected implant is moved toward the treatment site with a desired insertion tool, implant contacting surfaces 50a, 50b (Fig. 3) of blades 44a, 44b contact respective slots 45. Preferably, implant contacting surfaces 50a, 50b of blades 44a, 44b are closer together than the point of connection 51a, 51b of blades 44a, 44b to respective jaws 14a, 14b. Thus, jaws 14a, 14b are sufficiently spaced apart to

permit insertion of the thickest dimension of the implant therebetween, yet blades 44a, 44b are closer together to account for the narrower dimension of the implant in the region of slots 45 and thereby to securely grasp the implant via slots 45.

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 8, line 18 as follows:

In accordance with the principles of the present invention, the distractor blades preferably are configured to increase versatility of use of the distractor of the present invention. It will be appreciated that distractor 10 preferably is formed from a surgical grade sterilizable metal such that the same distractor may be used for different patients. In order to increase the versatility of distractor 10 and its usefulness for different patients and situations, at least one of blades 44a, 44b may be removably coupled to its respective jaw 14a, 14b, as illustrated in Fig. 7. Thus, in such embodiment, jaws 14a, 14b are provided with a socket 60a, 60b shaped to receive a mounting post 62 of a blade 44, as shown in Figs. 7 and 8. Post 62 may be releasably held within a bore 60 of a jaw 14 in any desired manner. For example, a ball detent attachment may be formed by providing a depression 64 in post 62 (Fig. 8) for matingly receiving a biased detent ball 66 housed within a transverse bore 68 in jaw 14 (Fig. 9). Blade post 62 preferably is fitted within socket 60 to permit pivotable movement of blade 44 about longitudinal axis 70 of blade post 62. Such pivotable movement facilitates manipulation of blade 44 with respect to the vertebral endplates to ease removal of blade 44 and distractor 10. If desired, in order to limit the range of pivotal motion of blade 44, a stop plate 72 (Figs. 6-8) may be provided on post 62 to fit within range limiting groove 74 (Fig. 7) in jaw 14. Stop plate 72 extends transversely from post 62, as may be appreciated with reference to Fig. 6 and has stop surfaces 76a, 76b engaging respective range limiting surfaces 78a, 78b of range limiting groove 74. ~~The spaced apart blades (Fig. 8a) are similarly configured having a mating portion in the form of a post 620 for reception in bore 60 in jaw 14. The post 620 of blades 440 is shown preferably including a depression 640 for a ball detent attachment within bore or socket 60 and a stop plate 720 for limiting the range of pivotal motion of blade 620 about the longitudinal axis 700. Blades 440 are also shown having distracting surfaces 520 which may preferably further include vertebral engagers 540 and transverse engagement walls 560.~~

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 9, line 3 as follows:

Removable attachment of blades 44 to jaws 14 permits a plurality of differently configured blades to be used with distractor 10 depending on the situation or application. For

example, the size of the blade may be selected based on the implant to be inserted, different implants potentially having differently sized slots for receiving a distractor blade. The size of the blade may also be selected depending on the size of the vertebrae being treated or the curvature of the vertebral column. For example, it may be desirable to select blades of different insertion lengths  $IL_1$ ,  $IL_2$ , as shown in Fig. 10, to account for spondylolisthesis which results in one vertebra  $V_1$  being closer to the distractor than the other vertebra  $V_2$ . Blade selection may also depend on the vertebral region being treated, which may affect the difficulty of the approach. For example, in the pelvic region organs and bony structures may complicate insertion and the use of blades 44' which are angled, such as 20°- 30°, with respect to the longitudinal axis 31 of distractor mechanism 30 may be desired. Such angled blades 44' would permit an angled approach of distractor 10 to avoid bony structures such as the pelvis. ~~It will be appreciated that the spaced apart blades 440 of varying lengths may be selected for use with distractor 10 or may be angled with respect to the longitudinal axis of distractor mechanism 30.~~

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 10, line 23 as follows:

Like blades 44 of distractor 10, blades 144a, 144b preferably are closer together than distal jaw ends 138a, 138b, as may be appreciated with reference to Fig. 13, such that blades 144a, 144b securely fit within slots 45 of an implant (as in Figs. 4 and 5) to grasp the implant yet jaws 114 permit insertion of an implant therethrough. Additionally, vertebral engagers 154a, 154b and transverse engagement walls 156a, 156b, similar to above-described vertebral engagers 54a, 54b and transverse engagement walls 56a, 56b, may be provided to enhance engagement of blades 144a, 144b with the endplates at the treatment site as described above in connection with distractor 10. However, unlike blades 44 of distractor 10, blades 144 of distractor 100 preferably are fixedly secured to jaws 114, such as by formation of blades 144 and jaws 114 as a unitary piece. Thus, distractor 100 may readily be used in severely calcified areas requiring significant strength and durability of the distractor blades. ~~Alternatively, blades 144 may be configured substantially similarly to blades 440 of Fig. 8a.~~

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 12, line 5 as follows:

Vertebral engagers 254a, 254b and transverse engagement walls 256a, 256b, similar to above-described vertebral engagers 54a, 54b and transverse engagement walls 56a, 56b, may be provided to enhance engagement of blades 244a, 244b with the endplates at the

treatment site as described above in connection with distractor 10. Blades 244 of distractor 200 preferably are fixedly secured to jaws 214, such as by formation of blades 244 and jaws 214 as a unitary piece. Thus, distractor 200 may readily be used in severely calcified areas requiring significant strength and durability of the distractor blades. ~~Alternatively, blades 244 may be configured similarly to blades 440 so as to be removably coupled with jaws 214.~~